

# A Know How Guide: working with two-year-olds (2024)

Learning & development	Assessment	Safeguarding & welfare
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## The Emotional Environment:

Area to reflect upon	What would this look like?	Pause for thought
<p><b>Attachment:</b> Providing a secure base to explore from and a safe haven to retreat to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The key person is introduced to the child and family over time and a 3-way relationship begins to develop.</li> <li>• When the parent leaves the child may demonstrate separation anxiety but can be soothed by the key person in time.</li> <li>• When the child has settled in, they are willing to explore the environment for brief periods of time without the key person.</li> <li>• The child can explore and take risks in their play and learning and return to, or check in with, the key person when needed.</li> <li>• The key person holds the key children in mind and is able to anticipate and tune in to their individual personalities and support needs.</li> <li>• The key person knows when to step in and when to withdraw from the child's play and learning.</li> <li>• The child knows that their key person can be relied upon to be responsive.</li> </ul>	<p>-Do we allow plenty of opportunities for the parent and child to become familiar with and build a relationship with the key person?</p> <p>-Do we recognise that each child's separation anxiety can be co-regulated by an attuned adult and allow for that?</p> <p>-Do we recognise the importance of the welcome and hand over as well as the reunion at the end of the session?</p> <p>-Do we consider how the environment can enable a secure base to be provided through cosy and relaxing places where children can go with adults or alone?</p> <p>-Do we observe and recognise the importance of each child using their key person as a safe haven, and the contribution of this to the development of the child's resilience, self-esteem and independence?</p> <p>-Do we allow for each child to move between dependence, inter-dependence and independence according to their current stage and the demands they may be feeling?</p>

Taken from: [tuning-in-to-two-year-olds-booklet \(harrow.gov.uk\)](http://tuning-in-to-two-year-olds-booklet(harrow.gov.uk)) (2014: p.7)

### The emotional environment – qualities of the key person:

Qualities of the key person	What would this look like?	Pause for thought
Responsive	<p>The key person recognises the wide range of emotional states of their key children and how they express these emotions.</p> <p>The key person is confident and consistent in being able to adapt their interaction to match the child's state.</p>	<p>-Do we include questions and information about children's emotional expression in their 'All about me' profiles and settling in discussions, for example: How do I respond to unfamiliar adults? -Do we regularly exchange information about how each child is feeling on a day to day basis?</p>
Reliable	<p>The key person offers every key child time for greetings, playing together and building relationships and independence.</p>	<p>-Do we allow time for greetings and departures? -Do we let the children know if their key person is not in on that day?</p>
Protective	<p>The key person provides a secure base for children from which to explore new opportunities and experiences.</p> <p>Manages risk and ensures the safety and wellbeing of their key children.</p> <p>Ensures consistency and dignity in carrying out personal care with their key children.</p>	<p>-Do we have places where children can retreat on their own but still be in sight and hearing of an adult?</p> <p>-Are we proactive when individual children's responses change to the environment? E.g. if a child is fascinated by snow?</p> <p>-Is the key person in a group setting responsible for the personal care of their key children?</p>
Emotionally intelligent/ attuned/ empathic	<p>The key person is confident and consistent in responding to 2-year olds' emotions.</p> <p>The key person can tune into situations and experiences which may impact on the child and provide appropriate emotional support.</p>	<p>-How do we support children in 'naming and taming' their emotions and feelings?</p> <p>-Are staff supported work through children's emotions with them?</p> <p>-How do we recognise the impact of the emotional and physical environment on children?</p> <p>-How do we tune in to and make sense of a 2-year-olds emotional responses to people?</p>
Available	<p>The key person offers emotional security, reflecting the growing independence and fluctuating dependence of 2-year-olds.</p>	<p>-How do we connect with our key children throughout the day?</p>

Taken from: [tuning-in-to-two-year-olds-booklet \(harrow.gov.uk\)](http://tuning-in-to-two-year-olds-booklet(harrow.gov.uk)) (2014: p.9)

## The physical environment:

Learning environment	What would this look like?	Pause for thought
Social and emotional	<p>A place where two-year-olds know that their feelings are accepted as they learn to express them.</p> <p>An environment where children feel confident and are willing to try things out and take risks.</p> <p>Children are supported to play alongside others and encouraged to take turns in cooperative games.</p>	<p>Are there cosy areas with soft cushions where two-year-olds can relax?</p> <p>Do we create 'interest' baskets for individual children, so they can share and discuss their fascinations?</p> <p>How do we vary resources to maintain interest and develop new experiences?</p> <p>What resources do we have that support and develop the language needed to develop co-operation and social skills?</p>
Communication and language	<p>A setting that has cosy, contained, quieter areas where children can share books, sit and chat peacefully with their friends as well as adults.</p> <p>Areas where children can express joy and excitement.</p> <p>A place where adults support children to communicate, allowing them time to start conversations, building on their vocabulary and commenting on their experiences.</p>	<p>What 'communication friendly spaces' do we have where children can listen, understand and speak? E.g. tents</p> <p>How do we use displays and resources to stimulate conversation?</p> <p>How do we minimise background noise? When do we play music and why?</p> <p>How much time do we spend listening to children, allowing them to lead conversations?</p>
Physical development	<p>Indoor and outdoor spaces that provide safe, secure yet challenging spaces for children.</p> <p>Stimulating spaces that support active play and exploration.</p> <p>Spaces that offer children the freedom to explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant.</p>	<p>Do both indoor and outdoor spaces reflect all areas of the curriculum? How free is the access to outdoor play?</p> <p>How much space is taken up by tables and chairs? How much play happens on the floor?</p> <p>How do we provide spaces that are for active play and also define and protect spaces that are for more contained and quieter play or rest?</p>

Taken from: [\(tuning-in-to-two-year-olds-booklet \(harrow.gov.uk\)\)](http://tuning-in-to-two-year-olds-booklet(harrow.gov.uk)) (2014: p.19)

## The characteristics of effective learning:

Area to reflect upon	What would this look like?	Pause for thought
<p><b>Playing and exploring</b> Finding out and exploring</p> <p>Willing to have a go</p> <p>Playing with known items</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two-year-olds will have particular interests and fascinations – these may change from day to day.</li> <li>• Children explore and discover the world by the use of their senses.</li> <li>• Two-year-olds are beginning to make choices and create new activities.</li> <li>• They enjoy finding out ways to use objects and have clear ideas of what they want to do, even if it involves a lot of trial and error.</li> </ul>	<p>-How do we plan to build on children’s interests and fascinations to develop their learning?</p> <p>-How do we ensure there is a multi-sensory approach to introducing and teaching new ideas and concepts?</p> <p>-Do we provide opportunities for children to make simple choices?</p>
<p><b>Active Learning</b> Keep on trying</p> <p>Achieving</p> <p>Being involved and concentrating</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two-year-olds are very eager to achieve their goals and will try again and again to do so.</li> <li>• Two-year-olds are very proud of their achievements and are eager to share them with their important people.</li> <li>• Two-year-olds can remain engaged and pay attention to details such as how a worm wriggles or how water feels.</li> </ul>	<p>-Do we allow children the opportunity to consolidate previous experiences?</p> <p>-Do we offer children the opportunity to meet and conquer a challenge (i.e. climbing a slide or painting a picture)?</p> <p>-Are we attentive to children when they want to express their joy at completing a task or mastering a new skill?</p> <p>-How do we ensure children have enough time to experience their fascinations for as long as they need to?</p>
<p><b>Creating and Thinking Critically</b> Having their own ideas</p> <p>Choosing Ways to do things</p> <p>Making Links</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two-year-olds can use materials in a variety of ways, often coming up with original ideas and ways to solve a problem they set themselves.</li> <li>• Once set on a plan of action they may find this doesn’t work (e.g. I got this cork in the bottle, now I can’t get it out) and will come up with solutions to the problems. Resilient children will keep trying until they have achieved their goal.</li> </ul>	<p>-Do we use open ended questions to support children’s ideas about how to solve problems (i.e. I wonder what would happen if...)</p> <p>-Do we provide enough time and space for children to try a variety of ways to solve their problems or do we finish it for them?</p> <p>-Do we provide a range of cause-and-effect resources?</p>

Taken from: [\(tuning-in-to-two-year-olds-booklet \(harrow.gov.uk\)\)](http://tuning-in-to-two-year-olds-booklet(harrow.gov.uk)) (2014: p.21)

## Prime areas: personal, social and emotional development:

### EYFS statutory educational programme:

Children's personal, social and emotional development (PSED) is crucial for children to lead healthy and happy lives and is fundamental to their cognitive development. Underpinning their personal development are the important attachments that shape their social world. Strong, warm and supportive relationships with adults enable children to learn how to understand their own feelings and those of others. Children should be supported to manage emotions, develop a positive sense of self, set themselves simple goals, have confidence in their own abilities, to persist and wait for what they want and direct attention as necessary. Through adult modelling and guidance, they will learn how to look after their bodies, including healthy eating, and manage personal needs independently. Through supported interaction with other children, they learn how to make good friendships, co-operate and resolve conflicts peaceably. These attributes will provide a secure platform from which children can achieve at school and in later life.

[Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/61222/Statutory_framework_for_the_early_years_foundation_stage.pdf)

### Helping children with their personal, social and emotional development:

Research suggests that these are effective approaches:

- responding to children in a steady and reliable way, with emotional warmth and sympathy
- encouraging children to communicate how they are feeling, which can be supported by modelling the correct language and labelling the emotion – for example, “I can see that you're sad because you're crying”
- using stories to explore how others might be feeling
- helping children to understand and co-operate with routines and rules
- encouraging children to manage 'effortful control' or patience, such as waiting for something they want or taking turns – if adults are too controlling, this may slow down the child's development

Note: Some non-compliance is typical as two-year-olds develop their independence and autonomy. Tantrums, hitting and biting are also common: physical aggression in humans reaches its peak between the ages of two and three-years old. Young children want to express themselves, but they find it difficult. When they feel frustrated, they may express this as a tantrum. As we help children to talk more about how they are feeling, tantrums become less common. It is important for parents and practitioners to respond calmly and be clear and consistent. Children who are treated harshly are more likely to become aggressive.

[Progress check at age two – Non-statutory guidance for the early years foundation stage \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/61222/Progress_check_at_age_two_-_Non-statutory_guidance_for_the_early_years_foundation_stage.pdf)

### Prime areas: personal, social and emotional development:

Young children will be learning to:	Examples of how to support this:
Find ways to calm themselves, through being calmed and comforted by their key person.	When settling a young child into nursery, the top priority is for the key person to develop a strong and loving relationship with the young child. Learn from the family about what they do to soothe their child and what to look out for – for example, a baby who scratches at their head when they are getting tired.
Establish their sense of self.	Young children develop a sense of self by interacting with others, and by exploring their bodies and objects around them, inside and outdoors.
Express preferences and decisions. They also try new things and start establishing their autonomy.	Be positive and interested in what babies do as they develop their confidence in trying new things.
Engage with others through gestures, gaze and talk.	Help toddlers and young children to make informed choices from a limited range of options. Suggestion: enable children to choose which song to sing from a set of four song cards, by pointing. Enable children to choose whether they want milk or water at snack time.
Use that engagement to achieve a goal. For example, gesture towards their cup to say they want a drink.	Support children as they find their own different ways to manage feelings of sadness when their parents leave them. Young children need to feel secure as they manage difficult emotions. Provide consistent and predictable routines, with flexibility when needed.
Find ways of managing transitions, for example from their parent to their key person.	Provide consistent, warm, and responsive care.
Thrive as they develop self-assurance.	Arrange resources inside and outdoors to encourage children’s independence and growing self-confidence. Store resources so that children can access them freely, without needing help.
Play with increasing confidence on their own and with other children, because they know their key person is nearby and available. Enjoy exploring new places with their key person.	

Taken from: [Development Matters – Non-statutory curriculum guidance for the early years foundation stage \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/363642/Development_Matters_-_Non-statutory_curriculum_guidance_for_the_early_years_foundation_stage.pdf)

### Prime areas: personal, social and emotional development (cont.):

Young children will be learning to:	Examples of how to support this:
<p>Feel strong enough to express a range of emotions. Grow in independence, rejecting help (“me do it”). Sometimes this leads to feelings of frustration and tantrums.</p> <p>Begin to show ‘effortful control’. For example, waiting for a turn and resisting the strong impulse to grab what they want or push their way to the front.</p> <p>Be increasingly able to talk about and manage their emotions.</p> <p>Notice and ask questions about differences, such as skin colour, types of hair, gender, special needs and disabilities, religion and so on.</p>	<p>Help children to feel emotionally safe with a key person and, gradually, with other members of staff.</p> <p>Show warmth and affection, combined with clear and appropriate boundaries and routines. Develop a spirit of friendly co-operation amongst children and adults.</p> <p>Encourage children to express their feelings through words like ‘sad’, ‘upset’ or ‘angry’. Toddlers and young children may have periods of time when their favourite word is ‘no’ and when they want to carry out their wishes straight away. Maintain sensible routines and boundaries for children during these testing times. Negative or harsh responses can cause children to feel unduly anxious and emotionally vulnerable.</p> <p>Offer supervision or work discussion sessions to staff. Staff will need to talk about the strong feelings that children may express. How are practitioners feeling about these and developing their understanding of the children’s feelings?</p> <p>When appropriate, notice and talk about children’s feelings. For example: “I can see it’s hard to wait, just a minute and then it’s your turn to go down the slide.”</p> <p>Model useful phrases like “Can I have a turn?” or “My turn next.”</p> <p>Be open to what children say about differences and answer their questions straightforwardly. Help children develop positive attitudes towards diversity and inclusion.</p> <p>Help all children to feel that they are valued, and they belong.</p>

Taken from: [Development Matters – Non-statutory curriculum guidance for the early years foundation stage \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/432424/Development_Matters_-_Non-statutory_curriculum_guidance_for_the_early_years_foundation_stage.pdf)



### Prime areas: personal, social and emotional development (cont.):

Young children will be learning to:	Examples of how to support this:
<p>Develop friendships with other children.</p> <p>Safely explore emotions beyond their normal range through play and stories.</p> <p>Talk about their feelings in more elaborated ways: “I’m sad because...” or “I love it when ...”.</p> <p>Learn to use the toilet with help, and then independently.</p>	<p>Support children to find ways into the play and friendship groups of others. For example, encourage them to stand and watch from the side with you. Talk about what you see, and suggest ways for the child to join in.</p> <p>Story times with props can engage children in a range of emotions. They can feel the family’s fear as the bear chases them at the end of ‘We’re Going on a Bear Hunt’. They can feel relief when the Gruffalo is scared away by the mouse.</p> <p>Recognise, talk about and expand on children’s emotions. For example, you might say: “Sara is smiling. She really wanted a turn with the truck.”</p> <p>You cannot force a child to use the potty or toilet. You need to establish friendly co-operation with the child. That will help them take this important step. Children can generally control their bowels before their bladder. Notice when young children are ready to begin toilet training and discuss this with their parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• they know when they have got a wet or dirty nappy</li> <li>• they get to know when they are peeing and may tell you they are doing it</li> <li>• the gap between wetting is at least an hour</li> <li>• they show they need to pee by fidgeting or going somewhere quiet or hidden</li> <li>• they know when they need to pee and may say so in advance.</li> </ul> <p>Potty training is fastest if you start it when the child is at the last stage. By the age of 3, 9 out of 10 children are dry most days. All children will have the occasional ‘accident’, though, especially when excited, busy or upset.</p>

Taken from: [Development Matters – Non-statutory curriculum guidance for the early years foundation stage \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/432222/Development_Matters_-_Non-statutory_curriculum_guidance_for_the_early_years_foundation_stage.pdf)

## Prime areas: communication and language (cont.):

### EYFS statutory educational programme:

The development of children's spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development. Children's back-and-forth interactions from an early age form the foundations for language and cognitive development. The number and quality of the conversations they have with adults and peers throughout the day in a language-rich environment is crucial. By commenting on what children are interested in or doing, and echoing back what they say with new vocabulary added, practitioners will build children's language effectively. Reading frequently to children, and engaging them actively in stories, non-fiction, rhymes, and poems, and then providing them with extensive opportunities to use and embed new words in a range of contexts, will give children the opportunity to thrive. Through conversation, storytelling and role play, where children share their ideas with support and modelling from their teacher, and sensitive questioning that invites them to elaborate, children become comfortable using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures.

[Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/441222/20170914-eyfsestatutoryframework.pdf)

### Helping children with their communication:

Research suggests that these are effective approaches:

- listening to children and having conversations with them ('talking with' and not just 'talking to' children)
- sharing books, especially with wordless picture books – use the book as a way of having a conversation: "What do you think is happening in the picture there?" or "Why do you think the boy is sad?"
- talking together while you play or do jobs around the house (getting food out of the fridge, sorting out washing, gardening or washing up)
- singing and saying rhymes together
- modelling a range of different types of words and phrases, rather than asking and 'testing' the child – for example, rather than asking "What are you doing?" or "What colour is that?", try to model a useful phrase such as "You're eating your dinner. It's delicious" or "I love that blue hat."

### English as an additional language:

More than a quarter of children in early years settings are learning English as an additional language. It is important to note the following points.

- Bilingual and multilingual children may have a quiet phase at first, as they settle in and develop their confidence. Encouraging them to take part and become more confident is key.
- Children learn a language by speaking it. If a child is going through a long 'silent phase', find out from the parent if their home language is developing well. Check in case the child has a speech, language and communication delay.
- Practitioners and professionals should encourage families to use their home language. This is for linguistic as well as cultural reasons. Talk to parents about what language they speak at home, learn a few key words and celebrate multilingualism in your setting.

[Progress check at age two – Non-statutory guidance for the early years foundation stage \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/441222/20170914-eyfsestatutoryframework.pdf)

## Early speech and language development chart:

Stage and age	Attention and listening	Understanding of language	Speech Sounds And Talk	Social skills and use of language
0-11 months The Early Communicator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Turns towards a familiar sound</li> <li>Startled by loud sounds</li> <li>Watches face when someone talks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognises parent's voice</li> <li>Understands frequently used words such as "all gone", "no", "bye-bye"</li> <li>Stops and looks when hears own name</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicates in a variety of ways - gurgling, crying, babbling</li> <li>Plays with speech sounds (bababa) &gt; 10</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reaches out and points</li> <li>Makes vocal sounds to get attention</li> <li>Tries to copy adult speech and lip movement</li> <li>Takes turns in conversations using babble</li> <li>Senses different emotions in carers voice and responds differently (quietening, laughing, smiling etc) &gt; 12</li> </ul>
8-20 months First Word User	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Locates source of voice with accuracy</li> <li>Pays attention to dominant stimulus</li> <li>Enjoys music and singing</li> <li>Concentrates intently on an object or activity of own choosing, for increasing periods of time. &gt; 20</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gives named objects to adult (book, apple, car)</li> <li>Understands simple instructions ("kiss Mummy", "where's your nose", "stop")</li> <li>Recognises and points to objects, or pictures in books if asked &gt; 18</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Babbling in strings of connected but different sounds ba-ba-no-no-go-go</li> <li>Reaches out or points to objects while making speech sounds</li> <li>Uses around 10 single words although they may not be clear &gt; 20</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses gestures such as waving and pointing with eye gaze to requests and share interests</li> <li>Plays alone but likes to be near familiar adult</li> <li>Responds to words and interactive rhymes such as "clap hands"</li> <li>Uses simple pretend play e.g. feeding teddy &gt; 20</li> </ul>
16-27 months Combiner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responds to an adult talking and briefly shifts attention from something they are doing to the speaker</li> <li>Recognises and responds appropriately to many familiar sounds e.g. a knock on the door</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understands 200-500 <b>single</b> words</li> <li>Understands simple instructions, containing 2 key words without clues &gt; 24</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses up to 50 words</li> <li>Begins to combine two or three simple words &gt; 36</li> <li>Begins to ask simple questions ("where's my drink?")</li> <li>Can be understood by familiar adult &gt; 36</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pretend play developing with toys (feeding a doll or talking on telephone)</li> <li>Follow adult body language including pointing, gesture and facial expression</li> </ul>
22-36 months Early sentence user	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Listens with interest to the noises adults make when they read stories</li> <li>Single channelled attention, can shift to a different task if attention is first gained by adult &gt; 36</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understands who, what, where questions (but not why)</li> <li>Identifies action words by pointing to the right picture e.g. "who's jumping"</li> <li>Demonstrates understanding of the language linked to early concepts including 'in/on/under', 'big/little' &gt; 36</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses a wide range of words including descriptive language, time, space and function/action</li> <li>Links 4-5 words together</li> <li>Able to use pronouns (me, him, she)</li> <li>Able to use prepositions (in on under)</li> <li>Starting to use word endings ('ing', 's')</li> <li>Can be mostly understood by strangers &gt; 48</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can take several turns in a conversation but jumps from topic to topic</li> <li>Expresses emotion to adults and peers using words not just actions</li> <li>Has some favourite stories, songs and rhymes</li> <li>Uses language to share ideas and experiences</li> <li>Interested in others play and will join in &gt; 36</li> </ul>
30-50 months Later sentence user	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enjoys listening to stories</li> <li>Can shift attention between listening to others and doing own activity without adult prompt. Anticipates and joins in with familiar actions and phrases in rhymes and stories</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understands use of objects ("what do we use to cut things?")</li> <li>Shows understanding of prepositions (behind, in front)</li> <li>Aware of time in terms of today, yesterday, tomorrow</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses talk to connect ideas and explain what is happening</li> <li>Asks lots of why questions</li> <li>Can retell a simple past event in correct order</li> <li>Using more complex sentences &gt; 48</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understands turn-taking as well as sharing with adults and peers</li> <li>Initiates conversations</li> <li>Enjoys playing with peers</li> <li>Able to argue with adults or peers if they disagree – uses words not just actions</li> </ul>

### Prime areas: communication and language (cont.):

Young children will be learning to:	Examples of how to support this:
Generally, focus on an activity of their own choice and find it difficult to be directed by an adult.	Help young children to focus their attention by using their name: “Fatima, put your coat on”.
Listen to other people’s talk with interest but can easily be distracted by other things.	You can help toddlers and young children listen and pay attention by using gestures like pointing and facial expressions.
Make themselves understood and can become frustrated when they cannot.	You can help young children who are having tantrums by being calm and reassuring.
Start to say how they are feeling, using words as well as actions.	Help young children to express what’s angering them by suggesting words to describe their emotions, like ‘sad’ or ‘angry’.
Start to develop conversation, often jumping from topic to topic.	Make time to connect with young children. Tune in and listen to them and join in with their play, indoors and outside.
Develop pretend play: ‘putting the baby to sleep’ or ‘driving the car to the shops’.	Allow plenty of time to have conversations together, rather than busily rushing from one activity to the next. When you know a young child well, it is easier to understand them and talk about their family life. For example: “OK, I see. You went to the shops with Auntie Maya”.
Listen to simple stories and understand what is happening, with the help of the pictures.	Share picture books every day with children. Encourage them to talk about the pictures and the story. Comment on the pictures – for example: “It looks like the boy is a bit worried...” and wait for their response. You might also ask them about the pictures: “I wonder what the caterpillar is doing now?” Books with just pictures and no words can especially encourage conversations. Tell children the names of things they do not know and choose books that introduce interesting new vocabulary to them.

Taken from: [Development Matters - Non-statutory curriculum guidance for the early years foundation stage \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/432222/Development_Matters_-_Non-statutory_curriculum_guidance_for_the_early_years_foundation_stage.pdf)

**Prime areas: communication and language (cont.):**

Young children will be learning to:	Examples of how to support this:
<p>Identify familiar objects and properties for practitioners when they are described: for example: ‘Katie’s coat’, ‘blue car’, ‘shiny apple’.</p> <p>Understand and act on longer sentences like ‘make teddy jump’ or ‘find your coat’.</p> <p>Understand simple questions about ‘who’, ‘what’ and ‘where’ (but generally not ‘why’).</p>	<p>When appropriate, you can check children’s understanding by asking them to point to particular pictures. Or ask them to point to particular objects in a picture. For example: “Can you show me the big boat?”</p> <p>When talking with young children, give them plenty of processing time (at least 10 seconds). This gives them time to understand what you have said and think of their reply.</p>

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**Early communication screen**

The Early Communication Screen is a quick, easy to administer screening tool designed to be delivered by practitioners with children from 2-5 years of age. This screening tool can be used to identify difficulties in understanding and spoken language skills and the results enable practitioners to plan appropriate interventions and measure progress. The training will give participants the skills and knowledge to administer the Early Communication Screen accurately and interpret the results effectively. Each school or setting will be sent one handbook and record form booklet, before the training session.

Further details on future training dates for ‘Making language matter: screening children’s speech and language in the early years’ can be found at: [UCS Shrewsbury CPD \(ucshrewsbury.ac.uk\)](https://www.ucshrewsbury.ac.uk)

## Prime areas: physical development:

### EYFS statutory educational programme:

Physical activity is vital in children's all-round development, enabling them to pursue happy, healthy and active lives<sup>7</sup>. Gross and fine motor experiences develop incrementally throughout early childhood, starting with sensory explorations and the development of a child's strength, co-ordination and positional awareness through tummy time, crawling and play movement with both objects and adults. By creating games and providing opportunities for play both indoors and outdoors, adults can support children to develop their core strength, stability, balance, spatial awareness, co-ordination and agility. Gross motor skills provide the foundation for developing healthy bodies and social and emotional well-being. Fine motor control and precision helps with hand-eye co-ordination, which is later linked to early literacy. Repeated and varied opportunities to explore and play with small world activities, puzzles, arts and crafts and the practice of using small tools, with feedback and support from adults, allow children to develop proficiency, control and confidence.

[Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

### Helping children with their physical development:

Active children are healthy, happy, school ready and sleep better. Physical activity in the early years:

- builds relationships and social skills
  - maintains health and weight
  - contributes to brain development and learning
  - improves sleep • develops muscles and bones
  - encourages movement and co-ordination
- Research suggests that children aged two should spend at least 180 minutes (three hours) per day in a variety of physical activities at any intensity, including active and outdoor play, spread throughout the day – more is better For more information, refer to the UK Chief Medical Officers' physical activity guidelines for early years [UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

[Progress check at age two – Non-statutory guidance for the early years foundation stage \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

### Prime areas: physical development (cont.):

Young children will be learning to:	Examples of how to support this:
<p>Gradually gain control of their whole body through continual practice of large movements, such as waving, kicking, rolling, crawling and walking.</p> <p>Clap and stamp to music.</p>	<p>Provide a wide range of opportunities for children to move throughout the day: indoors and outside, alone or with others, with and without apparatus. Include risky and rough and tumble play, as appropriate. Join in with children’s movement play when invited and if it is appropriate. Then you can show different ways of moving and engaging with the resources.</p>
<p>Fit themselves into spaces, like tunnels, dens and large boxes, and move around in them.</p> <p>Enjoy starting to kick, throw and catch balls.</p> <p>Build independently with a range of appropriate resources.</p>	<p>Help young children learn what physical risks they are confident and able to take.</p> <p>Encourage children to climb unaided and to stop if they do not feel safe. If you lift them onto the apparatus and hold them so they balance, they will not develop a sense of what they can do safely.</p>
<p>Walk, run, jump and climb – and start to use the stairs independently.</p> <p>Spin, roll and independently use ropes and swings (for example, tyre swings). Sit on a push-along wheeled toy, use a scooter or ride a tricycle.</p>	<p>Offer outdoor play every day for at least 45 minutes. Include lots of opportunities for children to move freely and explore their surroundings like a slope, a large hole, puddles or a sandpit. Consider wider opportunities for movement. Suggestions: using large moveable resources like hollow blocks, swinging on monkey bars, soft play, climbing walls, crawling into tunnels and dens. Consider going to suitable local facilities.</p> <p>As soon as children are able, encourage ‘active travel’ to and from the setting – for example, walking, scooter or bike. Provide materials and equipment that support physical development – both large and small motor skills. Encourage children to use materials flexibly and combine them in different ways. Check that children’s clothing and footwear are not too tight or too large.</p>

Taken from: [Development Matters - Non-statutory curriculum guidance for the early years foundation stage \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/372722/Development_Matters_-_Non-statutory_curriculum_guidance_for_the_early_years_foundation_stage.pdf)

**Prime areas: physical development (cont.):**

Young children will be learning to:	Examples of how to support this:
<p>Use large and small motor skills to do things independently, for example manage buttons and zips, and pour drinks.</p> <p>Show an increasing desire to be independent, such as wanting to feed themselves and dress or undress.</p> <p>Start eating independently and learning how to use a knife and fork.</p>	<p>Provide young children with lots of opportunities to feed themselves. Encourage them to dress and undress independently. Be patient, do not rush and take time to talk about what they are doing and why: "It's a bit cold and wet today – what do we need to wear to keep warm and dry?"</p> <p>At meal and snack times, encourage children to try a range of foods as they become more independent eaters. Encourage children to help with carrying, pouring drinks, cleaning and sorting.</p> <p>Encourage young children’s personal decision-making by offering real choices – water or milk, for example. They can comment on how to eat healthily, listen to children’s responses and develop conversations about this. Encourage good eating habits and behaviours, such as not snatching, sharing and waiting for a second helping.</p>
<p>Develop manipulation and control.</p>	<p>Provide different types of paper for children to tear, make marks on and print on.</p>
<p>Explore different materials and tools.</p>	<p>Provide lots of different things for young children to grasp, hold and explore, like clay, finger paint, spoons, brushes, shells.</p> <p>Note: Look out for children who find it difficult to sit comfortably on chairs. They may need help to develop their core muscles. You can help them by encouraging them to scoot on sit-down trikes without pedals and jump on soft-play equipment.</p>

Taken from: [Development Matters - Non-statutory curriculum guidance for the early years foundation stage \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/130933/Development_Matters_-_Non-statutory_curriculum_guidance_for_the_early_years_foundation_stage.pdf)



## Two Year Assessment:

Taken from [Development Matters - Non-statutory curriculum guidance for the early years foundation stage \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/422222/development-matters-non-statutory-curriculum-guidance-for-the-early-years-foundation-stage.pdf)

	Observational check points for two-year-olds:
Communication and Language	Is the child showing an interest in what other children are playing and sometimes joins in?
	Can the child use up to 50 words?
	Is the child beginning to put two or three words together: “more milk”?
	Can the child understand many more words than they can say – between 200-500 words?
	Can the child understand simple questions and instructions like: “where’s your hat” or “what’s the boy in the picture doing”?
Personal, Social & Emotional Development	Does the child start to see themselves as a separate person? For example, do they decide what to play with, what to eat, what to wear?
	Does the child start to enjoy the company of other children and want to play with them?
Physical Development	Can the toddler run well, kick a ball, and jump with both feet off the ground at the same time?



Department  
for Education

# Progress check at age two

Non-statutory guidance  
for the early years  
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## Welfare requirements:

### Nappy changing and potty training:

- EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers (2024): 3.72. Providers **must** ensure: *There is an adequate number of toilets and hand basins available – there should usually be separate toilet facilities for adults. There are suitable hygienic changing facilities for changing any children who are in nappies. There is an adequate supply of clean bedding, towels, spare clothes and any other necessary items.*
- A guide to potty training from The children’s bowel and bladder charity. [ERIC's Guide to Potty Training.pdf \(windows.net\)](#) [Potty training at nursery and school - ERIC](#)

### Sleeping arrangements:

- EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers (2024): 3.70. *Sleeping children **must** be frequently checked to ensure that they are safe. Practitioners may also find it helpful to refer to NHS advice safety of sleeping children: [Reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome \(SIDS\) - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)*

### Food and drink:

- EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers (2024): 3.37 ... *Whilst eating, children **must** be within sight and hearing of a member of staff.*
- EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers (2024): 3.56 *Where children are provided with meals, snacks and drinks, these **must** be healthy, balanced and nutritious. Before a child is admitted to the setting the provider **must** obtain information about any special dietary requirements, preferences, and food allergies that the child has, and any special health requirements. Fresh drinking water **must** always be available and accessible to children. Providers **must** record and act on information from parents and carers about a child's dietary needs.*
- EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers (2024): 3.57 *There **must** be an area adequately equipped to provide healthy meals, snacks and drinks for children as necessary. There **must** be suitable facilities for the hygienic preparation of food for children, if necessary, including suitable sterilisation equipment for babies’ food. Providers **must** be confident that those responsible for preparing and handling food are competent to do so. All staff involved in preparing and handling food **must** receive training in food hygiene. Section 4 of [Example menus for early years settings in England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) includes guidance on menu planning, food safety, managing food allergies and reading food labels, which staff preparing food will find helpful in ensuring that children are kept safe.*
- EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers (2024): 3.83 *Providers **must** share the following information with parents and/or carers ... Food and drinks provided for children.*
- Why is food safety so important for young children? [Food safety - Help for early years providers - GOV.UK \(education.gov.uk\)](#)

### Further reading and links to websites:

Nutbrown, C. (2011) *Threads of Thinking: Schemas and Young Children's Learning*. 4th edn. SAGE Publications Ltd.

Page, J., Clare, C. and Nutbrown, C. (2013) *Working with babies and children: From birth to three*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. SAGE Publications Ltd.

Tassoni, P. (2014) *Getting it right for Two Year Olds*. Hodder Education.

[A good place to be Two | Training resources | Community Playthings](#) (2013) This booklet covers all aspects of the environment indoors and out for two-year-olds.

[Babies and toddlers | Shropshire Council \(2023\)](#) Further guidance and advice for practitioners working with children from birth to two.

[Birth To 5 Matters – Guidance by the sector, for the sector](#) (2021) Non-statutory guidance for the early years foundation stage.

[Children's language development and parenting advice - BBC Tiny Happy People](#) (2023) Activities to help support their children's CL development.

[Development in 2-year-olds | PACEY](#)

[Early years child development training : Home page \(education.gov.uk\)](#) (2023) This free, online training provides an overview of child development.

[Early Years & KS1 Free Audits & Guides | Early Excellence](#) (2023) An audit check on the quality of provision for 2-3 year olds.

[ERIC's Guide to Potty Training.pdf \(windows.net\)](#) (2020) A guide to potty training.

[Help for early years providers - Department for Education](#) (2023) Guidance for people who work in early years, from the Department for Education.

[How I learn and grow | Shropshire Council](#) Suggestions for parents / carers to ensure their child develops well throughout the early years.

[Hygge in the early years – What it is and how to do it | Enabling Environments | Teach Early Years](#)

[Pen-Green-Key-Concepts-Schemas.pdf \(pengreen.org\)](#) (2018) Further information on understanding young children's repeated pattern of actions.

[the-cfs-approach-and-targeted-use-of-colour.pdf \(elizabethjarman.com\)](#) (2018) Further information on the Communication Friendly Spaces approach.

[Two Year Olds in a Mixed Age Group by Kathy Brodie \(abccdoes.com\)](#) (2012) In this blog, Kathy Brodie reflects on two-year-olds in a mixed aged group.

[Updated guidance to support the EYFS - Foundation Years](#) (2021) This guide is for parents / carers of children from birth to five years of age, helping them to find out more about their child's learning and development.